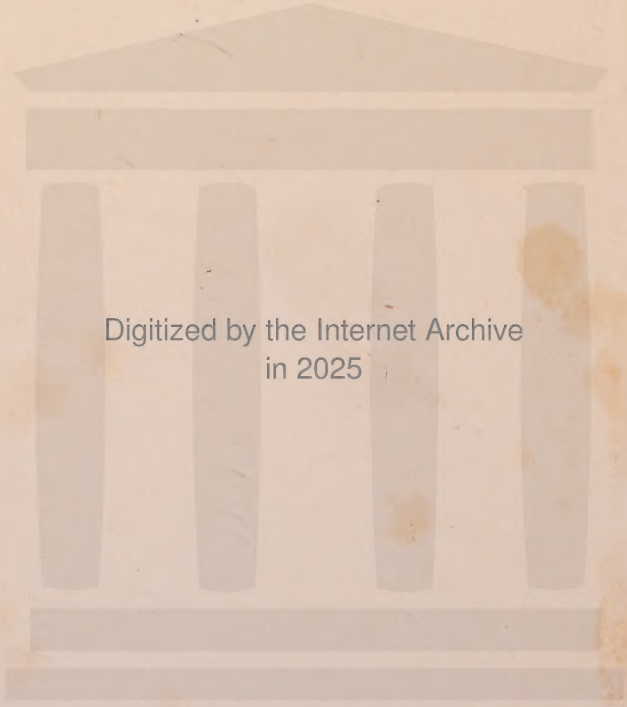
OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE



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O T H E R S

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE

"THE OLD EXPRESSIONS ARE WITH US ALWAYS, AND THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS."

OTHERS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE NEW VERSE

EDITED BY
ALFRED KREYMBORG

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THE SISTERS

We four
Live here together
My three old sisters and I
In a white little cottage
With flowers on each side of the path up to the door.
It is here we eat together
At eight one and seven
All the year round,
It is here we sew together
On garments for the Church sewing society
Here,— behind our fresh white dimity curtains
That I'll soon have to do up and darn again.
It is this cottage we mean
When we use the word Home
Is it not here we lie down and sleep
Each night all near together?

We never meet
My three old sisters and I.
We never look into each others' eyes
We never look into each others' souls
Or if we do for a moment
We quickly begin to talk about the jam

How much sugar to put in and when.
We run away and hide like mice before the light
We are afraid to look into each others' souls
So we keep on sewing, sewing.

My three old sisters are old
Very old.
It is not such a great while since they were born
Yet they are old.
I think it is because they will not look and see.
I am not old
But pretty soon I will be.
I was thinking of that when I went to him
Where he was waiting.

My sisters had been talking together all the long afternoon
While I sat sewing and silent,
Clacking, clacking away while the lilac scent came in at the window
And the branches beckoned and sighed.
This is what they said —
"How did that paper come into our house?"
"Fit to be burnt, don't you think?"
Then the third, "It's a shameless sheet
To print such a sensual thing."
The paper lay on the table there, between my three sisters

With my poem in it,—
My small happy poem without any name.
I had been with him when I wrote it and I wanted him again
The words arose in my heart clamouring for birth —
And there they were, between my three sisters.
Each read it in turn
Holding the paper far off with the tips of her fingers.
Then they hustled it into the fire
Giving it an extra poke with the tongs, a vicious poke.
Then each sister settled back to her sewing
With a satisfied air.
I looked at them and I wondered.
I looked at each one,
And I went to him that night —
Where he was waiting.

My three old sisters are dying
Though they do not know it.
They are not dying serenely
After life is over
They are just getting dryer and dryer
And sharper and sharper
Soon there will not be any more of them at all.

I am not like them
I cannot be
For I have a reason for living.

While they were picking their little pale odourless
blossoms
I gathered my great red flower
And oh I am glad, glad,
For now when the time comes I can die serenely,
I can die after living.

But first what is to come?
I am going to give my three old sisters a shock
Then what a rumpus there will be!
They will upbraid and reproach
And then they will whisper to each other, nodding
slowly and sadly
Telling each other it is not theirs to judge.
So they will become kind and pitiful
Affirming that I am their sister
And that they will stick by and see me through.
But underneath they will be touching me with the
lifted tips of their fingers.
They would like to hustle me into the fire
With an extra poke of the tongs.

Perhaps I will pretend to hang my head,
Perhaps I will to please them,
I am very obliging —
But in my heart I shall be laughing with a great
laughter
A great exaltation.

Yes, they will upbraid and reproach
In grave and sisterly accents
And mourn over me,
One who has fallen,
Yet I suspect
As each one goes to her cold little room,
Deep in her breast she will envy
With a terrible envy
The child that is mine
And the night
The curious night
When the sun and the moon and the stars
Bent down
And gave me their secrets.

VOYAGE A L'INFINI

The swan existing
Is like a song with an accompaniment
Imaginary.

Across the glassy lake,
Across the lake to the shadow of the willows,
It is accompanied by an image,
— As by Debussy's
" *Reflets dans l'eau.*"

The swan that is
Reflects
Upon the solitary water — breast to breast
With the duplicity:
" *The other one!* "

And breast to breast it is confused.
O visionary wedding! O stateliness of the procession!
It is accompanied by the image of itself
Alone.

At night
The lake is a wide silence,
Without imagination.

THE VOICE OF ONE DEAD

Of the relented limbs and the braid, O lady,
Bound up in haste at parting,
The secret is kept.

JUNE

These breaking buds,
These buds in a nest of leaves . . .

What wings have covered them,
And the warmth of what brooding mother,
That the roses,
The roses themselves,
Come out?

The roses are trying their petals . . .
Fly away, roses, after the wind.

FOR FORMS THAT ARE FREE

Loosen the web, Arachne, and we will waltz.
Loosen, Arachne,
The spider-web that has ensnared
The feet in such a struggling bergamask.

THE COTTON PICKER

Like the arm of a child, lifting shining lilies from a
little brown pond,
The sunlight drew songs from a lithe, grimacing
negress
Whose skin was smoother than the cloudless sky
above her . . .
The flecks of cotton they picked
Brought a changing white stupor to the tepid-faced
women about her,
And her shoulders fell as slowly as the sun above her.
Yet the pent satin of her face was always cut by a
smile,
As she hummed of a joyous Christ.

SUNDAY IN A CERTAIN CITY SUBURB

Four men whose lives are the beginning of sun-
silenced afternoons,
And whose orange and red scarfs are the sole flowers
Of the washed-out afternoons,
Sit, shifting dominoes.
The afternoon outside of them dies, as fruit slowly
pressed between fingers,
But still the four stiff men shift dominoes . . .
Their wives, wide women with tight, garnished hair,
Sit in the back-yard, whispering tiny secrets and
munching strings of grapes.

Their lives are the centers of half-cloudy days,
With now and then a noisy evening
In which they hang the crude little japanese-lanterns
of their thoughts
On the ever-swaying strings of their minds . . .

The domino-box is folded, the grapes are eaten.
Children, wheezing and limp, return.

THE REAR PORCHES OF AN APARTMENT-BUILDING

A sky that has never known sun, moon or stars:
A sky that is like a dead, kind face
Would have the color of your eyes,
O servant-girl, singing of pear-trees in the sun,
And scraping the yellow fruit you once picked
When your lavender-white eyes were alive. . .
On the porch above you are two women
Whose faces have the color of brown earth that has
never felt rain.
The still wet basins of ponds that have been drained
Are their eyes.
They knit gray rosettes and nibble cakes. . .
And on the top-porch are three children
Gravely kissing each others' foreheads —
And an ample nurse with a huge red fan. . .

The passing of the afternoon to them
Is but the lengthening of blue-black shadows on
brick walls.

THE VAGABOND IN THE PARK

They sit upon little benches, lips slack, eyelids
blinking
Like flapping white shades in the windows of empty
rooms.
The trees over them shift their lace with rushing,
smothered laughs,
And speak of the nakedness to come.
But the straight, shining women under the trees
Have never known what it is to take off dust-painted
clothes.

AFTER WRITING POETRY

My mind is a naked child
Living in the little half-crimson garden of my soul.
I bring people to the child in the garden.
Perhaps an apple-vender whose face is like a new
wood-cut;
A shop-girl, like the quickly-sketched princess in some
old water-color;
Or a window-washer who seems to have been taken
From a cool swarthy fresco. . .
At night when they have gone,
I and the naked child sit beneath a red bush
And chat about them:
Half-regretting the flowers they have taken away.

A DAY

Split, brown-blue clouds are over me,
And brown-blue mist is also
Over the little hills of my sprawling moods
And under the pale blue revery of my soul. . . .
Yet the hills are covered with shouting goat-herds
To whom the mist and revery is nothing.

AN OLD NEGRO ASLEEP

As spilled, dried wine that colors earth,
The yellow-white light sinks into his rubbed brown face,
And perhaps reaches even the seeded dreams below,
Melting them to webbed shapes he cannot hold.
Happily so, for if he awoke still bearing them,
He would be a filled chest unable to open itself. . . .
He squats afterward, making white grinning trinkets,
And thinks them the dreams he had.

TO A MAN

The once white statue of a woman, smudged and bloodied
With the dirty fingers of years, was his mind.
It lay, grave and neglected, at the base of its tall pedestal. . . .
But one day I found him washing it with his soul,
And heaving it with the strength of a smile, to the top of the pedestal.

I

I am Aladdin.
Wanting a thing I have but to snap my fingers.
Jinn, bring me a lady,
The lady with the magic kiss
That turns troubles into joys.
The lady of the soft white throat
And shell-tint cheeks.
Ah, here you are, Lady!
Thank you, Jinn.
Lady, sing to me
A song as gorgeous as the plumage of a Bird of Paradise.
Music melts in your mouth,
Becoming vaporous perfume,
Utterly intoxicating me.
Now you may dance for me a while.
Weave a delirious design
With your body,
Ah, you are like a gold fish
Glinting gaily
Darting through sparkling waters.
There, that will do, Lady.
Say you love me, now.
Yes, yes, I believe you.
I could not doubt that voice of yours
As full of the abandon of expression
As your dance.
And now, Lady,

The magic kiss!
Ummm! That is good.
Jinn, take her away.

II

The other night I dreamed
Of a shimmering opalescent mermaid
Sitting on a shell of mother of pearl
With her tail cocked up on the edge
Quite saucily.
She was blowing soap bubbles,
Iridescent,
And flirting with a rainbow fish.
I awoke with a stinging in my eyes
As though one of her gay drifting bubbles
Had burst in my face
With a spatter of soap suds.
But I could not believe that,
Knowing the bite came from bitter tears,
I had seen her only in a dream,
And that I
Could never be
A rainbow fish.

III

I love anything ostentatious
Simpler things I despise.
I like to hear a nose blown with a bang
See teeth picked with a flourish
Watch a fat lady wabble her cargo of flesh

As though it were worth a thousand dollars an ounce.
I think ostentation of any sort
Is just *grand.*

IV

Big footed people
Go about stepping on things;
Ideals, egos, the cosmos
They crush
Clod-hopperedly.

I should hate to have the epidermis
Of an ornithorincus
On the sole of an elephantine foot.
I prefer skipping lightly across egg shells
In padded Chinese slippers with blue embroidered
tops.

V

Fly speck,
You are such a neat, tidy, unimportant
Little thing
That no one takes offense
At sight of you
Or mention of your name.
But you irritate me
With your polite little airs of decency
Why don't you grow up
And be something?
Even a fly speck
Can aspire to be
A manure heap.

IKONS

1

I broke a savage bitch
who has two tails.
I named her 'Beauty'
from a beast
in Mythology.

We cannot live
in the houses of other men,
We cannot breathe
air from their sick bellies;
I will travel into lonely places
To laugh and think new thoughts.

2

I have been all
wrong from the beginning.
I will re-create myself.
I will be right.

But I'm in too great haste
to pluck lice away.

3

Let others wash me, serve food to me
And cleanse my pot.

I cannot be a pot-man.

How can I serve?
How can I be kind or unkind

And myself.

I can be neither more kind nor less kind
Than a meteor
Falling in a city.

Let the pot-men fester in the filth of their pots:
I must uncover
God's feet for the dancing.

1

A fool once said to me,
"How strange it is that you are
Glad and drunken."

I have burned a thousand things
Desirable but not mine.
I will not dance before God
with my body swathed in cloth.

2

We young men come up from our beginnings crying,
"Way! Make way for us!"
The old ones stand against us
Like lions who are old and angry.

One by one they fall
Under our feet.

Behind us the land is flat
Save for ghosts and the stone giants.

3

Some day the young men
Will come upon me
Crying, "Down with him! Down with him!"

I long for the day when the young men
Come against me.
To try our strength.

1

I have owed much to older people.
Why should I deny it?
To Nietszche and Mrs. Eddy and Blake and Whitman and Gauguin and those old Egyptians who cut for eternity.

I shall pass over some of these.
I shall crush them.
But
I owe much to older people.
Why should I deny it?

2

I will gobble up everything
That has been mine from the beginning.
Though I find it in the homes of other men
or in their purses or their thoughts
I will gobble up all
To the last jot of my own.

The man who plows fields is right
be the fields his or another's,
Pot-men are always right
and even the masters
have ploughed strange fields in their day.

For myself
I am no longer concerned with ploughing,
It's for the harvest I yearn,
The harvest the bare land the full dancing.

3

God made dancing.
Only pot-men walk.
The dancers gather at God's table
For joy that is drunken.

Lead was first smelted
From the souls of pot-men.

1

He who pulls flowers wantonly
Is a giant.
He who pulls flowers for their loveliness or perfume
Is one who can destroy giants
with the perfume of flowers.

I dislike men loving too many women.
I despise those loving their own sex.

They are wrong I am right.

I do not understand this
but it is true.

2

Men wash in their women
As gulls in the sea.

When they have spewed forth their white children,
Though they dislike children,
They are happy
Pure.

I do not understand this
but it is true.

3

I went walking on the beaches.

Like sand grains were young men and young women
Lying two by two.

I went walking on the beaches.

With my lantern
I looked in the young men's faces,
And they were all I.

I went walking on the beaches.

The beaches were empty.
They put out the sun like a candle
and all the stars
the moon
and my lantern.
A voice cried from the sea,
" If I vomit a woman at your feet
take her
breed children."

But I had spent my strength.

Then I woke up.

1

A coyote yapping at the moon
A wolf grinning at the lightning
Is the man of poems
Shouting of Him.

Him!
Him!

Glory on a dying fish.
Blue flies over the garbage.

Him!
Him!

O jackal sobbing at his loneliness.

2

Moon, demon of the heavens,
How great must your hatred be
for the peoples of earth.

Moon, I have poison,
hot and secret.
I will give you my poison,
devil of the sky.

You are crowned with stars.
We shall take your crown away.
We shall give your crown to the sun because of
dawns.

O wolf of the sky yapping at your moon.

3

I am tired of old colors
and old sounds,
I will make new sounds with my mouth
and they shall be music.

I will make new sounds
and new jumps and gestures.

When women lie down before us,
Making soft noises. . . .
Our eyes become yellow and we go to them
As mad eagles to the sun.

Women are green and barreled like guns,
Men are red and primed cartridges.
I desipse everything that is not
Green or red.

We are red, they green; and their greenness
Gives our red value and violence.

And when we leave you
With softness,
With kisses,
We are rich we are selves,
When we withdraw
Deeply
Into the sea.

CINQUAINS

NOVEMBER NIGHT

Listen. .
With faint dry sound,
Like steps of passing ghosts,
The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees
And fall.

RELEASE

With swift
Great sweep of her
Magnificent arm my pain
Clanged back the doors that shut my soul
From life.

TRIAD

These be
three silent things:
The falling snow . . the hour
Before the dawn . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

TRAPPED

Well and
If day on day
Follows, and weary year
On year . . and ever days and years . .
Well?

MOON-SHADOWS

Still as
On windless nights
The moon-cast shadows are,
So still will be my heart when I
Am dead.

SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS

"Why do
You thus devise
Evil against her?" "For that
She is beautiful, delicate;
Therefore."

YOUTH

But me
They cannot touch,
Old age and death . . the strange
And ignominious end of old
Dead folk!

THE GUARDED WOUND

If it
Were lighter touch
Than petal of flower resting
On grass, oh still too heavy it were,
Too heavy!

WINTER

The cold
With steely clutch
Grips all the land . . alack,
The little people in the hills
Will die!

NIGHT WINDS

The old
Old winds that blew
When chaos was, what do
They tell the clattered trees that I
Should weep?

AMAZE

I know
Not these my hands
And yet I think there was
A woman like me once had hands
Like these.

THE WARNING

Just now,
Out of the strange
Still dusk . . as strange, as still . .
A white moth flew. . Why am I grown
So cold?

FATE DEFIED

As it
Were tissue of silver
I'll wear, O fate, thy grey,
And go mistily radiant, clad
Like the moon.

THE LONELY DEATH

In the cold I will rise, I will bathe
In waters of ice; myself
Will shiver, and shrive myself,
Alone in the dawn, and anoint
Forehead and feet and hands;
I will shutter the windows from light,
I will place in their sockets the four
Tall candles and set them a-flame
In the grey of the dawn; and myself
Will lay myself straight in my bed,
And draw the sheet under my chin.

SONGS OF A GIRL

I

There is a morning standing at my window, looking into my room, and saying:

"What will you do with me?
I am your slave
I will bring to you whatever you wish
Only tell me what you want me to do
And I will do it,
What you want me to bring to you
And it is yours."

And with a sudden rush of tears to my heart, I said:

"Oh, morning, I do not want anything.
There is something I want, oh, very much!
But I do not know what it is exactly.
Perhaps to die — perhaps to live —"

II

I am not afraid of my own heart.
I am not afraid of what may be in the places where the shadows are piled.
I am not afraid — see, I walk straight in
And look everywhere.
I am not afraid — ah, what was that?

It is a dangerous place in which to walk — a heart.
Especially one's own.

III

Just to be young
Young enough to laugh when one should weep —

IV

There are three of us; the little girl I used to be, the girl I am, and the woman I am going to be. We take counsel together concerning what colors we shall weave into the dream that we are making.

Sometimes they say, she is day-dreaming,
They do not know that we are taking counsel together, the little girl, and the girl I am, and the woman that I am going to be.

There are many things that they do not know.

V

I was alone with just me, the other evening
The me that nobody else knows
The me that is the nicest person I have ever met.
(Oh, quite the nicest!)

I was alone with just me
We had much to talk over
We had never properly met before,
But only caught glimpses
(Sometimes we were sure we wanted to meet, and at other times we hoped that we never would)
We had all the years before to discuss and all the years after to talk about

And there were other things — ourselves, and what
life was — Oh, we had much to talk over.
So we sat there, silently, and did not say a word.

VI

The little kiss is trembling on my lips
It will not leave its home, it is afraid.
" Go, go," I whisper, but it weeps and stays.

The little kiss is restless on my lips
" Nay, I must go," it whispers, " I must go,"
" Ah, wait a little, wait," I counsel, " wait "—

VII

A turn of a stranger's head
Sometimes brings you very near to me.
A color,
A sound,
And I hear your breathing;
I feel your eyes upon mine.
A room darkened for the death of a day,
And I weep for you;
A bird crying out its song against its neighbors',
A flower new-born, startled —
And my heart beats with joy of you —

You whom I never knew
Whom I only loved.

VIII

I am going to die too, flower, in a little while
Do not be so proud —

LATER SONGS

I

The one who gives them out is short of dreams
With jealous husbandry
He deals them carefully
One dream to every two people
" You must share it
We're short of dreams," he says
But they
Are only glad of the excuse of sitting down
To the same dream —

II

Perhaps
God, planting Eden,
Dropped, by mistake, a seed
In Time's neighbor-plot,
That grew to be
This hour?

III

You and I picked up Life and looked at it curiously
We did not know whether to keep it for a plaything
or not
It was beautiful to see, like a red firecracker
And we knew, too, that it was lighted.

— We dropped it while the fuse was still burning —

IV

The careful ocean sews
Pools, like round blue buttons
On the gray coat of the sand.

V

A wave heaps
Green tangled ribbons of sea-weed
On the gray counter of the sand
Then it rushes away
Like a salesgirl when the gong sounds.

VI

The sun is dying
Alone
On an island
In the bay.
Close your eyes, poppies!
— I would not have you see death
You are so young —

VII

Whose passing foot
Disturbed this ant-hill?

PORTRAIT OF A LADY

" Thou hast committed —"
" Fornication: but that was in another country,
And besides, the wench is dead."
The Jew of Malta.

I

Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself — as it will seem
to do —
With " I have saved this afternoon for you "
And four wax candles in the darkened room
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead
An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.

We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-
tips.
" So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room."
— And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets

Through attenuated tones of violins
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins
"You do not know how much they mean to me,
my friends,
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are
not blind!
How keen you are!)
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
How much it means that I say this to you —
Without these friendships — life, what *cauchemar!*"

Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite "false note."
— Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks.
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
"Ah my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands; —"
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.
"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.

You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.

But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.

I shall sit here, serving tea to friends . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down; returning as before
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you
return?
But that's a useless question.
You hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn."
My smile falls heavily among the bric-a-brac.

"Perhaps you can write to me."
My self-possession flares up for a second;
This is as I had reckoned.
"I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends!)
Why we have not developed into friends."
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,
They all were sure our feelings would relate
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.

We must leave it now to fate.
You will write, at any rate.
Perhaps it is not too late.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance —

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;
Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
With the smoke coming down above the house tops;
Doubtful, for quite a while
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon. . .
Would she not have the advantage, after all?
This music is successful with a "dying fall"
Now that we talk of dying —
And should I have the right to smile?

THE DANCER

They were godly people, all of them,
With whom I dined
In the café that night —
Substantial citizens
With their virtuous wives
And a stray daughter or two. . . .
And when I spoke my admiration of your dancing,—
You, the little half-clothed painted cabaret performer
Who was pirouetting before us,—
I received a curious answer.—
It was only as the absurd voicing
Of a preposterous fancy
That one of the virtuous wives said to me —
"Why don't you go over and dance with her yourself!"
Her voice stung me,— it was so sure
That to dance with you would be a shameful and unpleasant thing.
So I answered crossly — "For a nickel I would."
And one of the daughters,
Who doubtless suffered later for her evil act,
Handed me the nickel. . . .

And that was how it came to be
That you and I
Before the gaping herd of my respectable fellow-townsmen
Forgot the world.
Light was the pressure of your hand
And your body was as answering to my touch
As is a little willow to the wind.
I could not see your painted face against my shoulder;
I forgot that you were clad in veils to lure the lustful crowd;
The tawdry glitter of the hour faded and died
As you and I soared up
Upon the music.
O soul of a bird!
O cooling wind from the mountains of wild laurel!
O dreamer of a pattern of whirling stars
Down which we moved
In dizzy orbits!
Perfumes of Arabia were around us;
Tremulous melody heard by none other
Out of some distant garden poured in wild song.
And there were lights in the air;
And there were memories
Of forgotten Thracian hillsides,
And madness, and oblivion,
And a fierce white peace.

Then the dance ended. . . .
And you were once more a little painted harlot
In an ugly café
Before a vulgar audience.
So I led you back to your table
And thanked you conventionally,
And turned to go.— But a sudden impulse
Swept me.—
And in the sight of all the gaping respectabilities
I turned to you again
And kissed you
In recognition and farewell
To that winged spirit which you late had been.

MAISONNETTES

The houses in Windermere Street are 'let off in floors'
Which perhaps is the reason it always seems so alert.
Little groups of young men and girls gather round its front doors,
And keen eyes at all windows observe their endeavors to flirt.

Every one in the street knew at once about Lizzie Brown.
They saw the flash bloke she took up with, and 'knew how 'twould be.'
And they knew why the blinds of the house at the corner are down,
And who pays the second floor's rent, at 103.

THE HIGHBROWETTES

(*Merveilleuses de nos jours*)

"We will now call on Alberic Morphine to give us a reading."
The rows of young women look up; their eyes glisten; they shiver
With the kind of emotion that's really *very* misleading.
All have fine eyes, yellow faces, vile clothes and a liver.

They smoke a great deal, bathe little, and wear no stays.
Their artistic garments are made on the Grecian plan;
They flock in their crowds to the pit, for Mr. Shaw's plays;
And aspire to a union of souls, with some pimply young man.

QUEST

Mist
Grey
Tremulous
And a mighty current beat:
Then sound ceased
And light was all,
Restless, tumultuous,
Then Peace.
And from the midst
A flower
White.
And one by one
The petals turned
Till they hung
Seven radiating flames.
And again
The petals fell away
And the calyx was upborne.
Silence
Peace
Mist
The return.

Love.
Not that bright Flaming-winged
But Very-love.

PERCHÉ

I am the possessor and the possessed.
I am of the unborn.
My kind have not yet come upon the earth.
Or — are they gone?
Am I then left, a memory of the dead?
Am I dream-wraith, a ghost of beauty fled?
I who possess and am possessed,
Am I born and dead?

Strange madnesses beset me.
Passing pageant-wise across my web of thought.
The red circlet of Narcissus gems my blood,—
And I brood on a golden reed.
Who doth possess me — I possess.
Yea, I am dead!

In the pale light from the grave
The Sisters weave:
Crimson — and green and golden thread
Upon Time's robe.

LES OMBRES DE LA MER

I grieve my dream:
My dream that was like a golden lacquered bowl,
My dream that was coloured like a Chinese print.
A wave of the sea has been here:
Muffled bells and red
Sea-stained gold:
Green flames under the foam,

The blue shadows darting like fishes.
Tread softly:
Do not cleave the air with Thy presence,
I guard my dead from the waters.

HERMAPHRODITUS

As if the soul of all this pulsing world had taken form
in thee,—
That thy face should be the flow of waters:
Thy voice the surge of many restless waters:
Thine eyes, envisioning night and all the depths on
depths of stars therein,
Should be the secret depths of waters:
Thy body's length the grace and suppleness
Of flowers upstanding from the earth.

And I have watched the mystic worry of thy face,
Upturned against the stars and wind,
Grow strange and sad.
Have felt the music that my hands awoke,
Have felt thee start and quiver
And marvelled how all parts of thee attuned.

IRIS

Ah, bow your head, white sword flower,
Lest you pierce the thing you would save,
Lest your white beauty slay me.
Let your heart's blue stain
Plead for my frailty.

HERM-APHRODITE-US

Behold me!
The perfect one!
Epitome of the universe!
The crystal sphere,—
reflecting
sex,—
being,—
God.

For long ages,—
moonlike,—
I turned one hemisphere
away from God,—
stubbornly reflecting
only half of His perfection,—
Man.

For this sin
God mocked me,—
showing himself in me;
monster of masculinity,—
tyrannous,
cruel,

war-mad,
death-gluttonous,
God,— inverted.

Then through love,
God saved me,—
melted my perverseness,
set me spinning,
in full God-light,—
reflecting wholly
His perfection,
woman in man,
man in woman,—
herm-aphrodite-us.

Behold me!
The perfect one!
The crystal sphere,—
reflecting perfect sex,—
reflecting perfect being,—
reflecting God.

REVENGE

I seek my revenge in the stars,
The quiet knowing stars.
I seek my revenge in the night,
The solemn truthful night.
And all the infinitude of space
Comes to aid in my revenge.

Let those who rule, rule.
They shall not rule my stars
Nor me;
For I am one with my stars
And my stars are one with me.
Sometimes there is noise in my stars,
A whirling noise of cynical joy,
And all their voices are lifted with my own
In the joy of revenge;
And I am one with the revenge
And the revenge is one with me.
We laugh with cynical joy
Until our laughter echoes and echoes
Into the most impenetrable depths of space
And beyond —
Gyrating through the unknown and beyond
And awakening the dumb ears of the world's dead God
To an only thought of mankind.

I laugh with joy at the mirth of my stars;
I laugh with joy at my revenge.
And there comes no voice to disturb my mirth,
Except the voice of dying men
Wailing on the winds of space
And death-rattling against the iron-ribbed stars.
But the sound of my mirth
And the mirth of my stars
Drown the wailing with cynical laughter.
And our laughter increases
Until it beats in time with the death rattle,
The hymn of our joy and revenge.

Thus all things laugh with my revenge —
Except mankind.
The very ground of earth laughs with me.
The flesh of man laughs with me.
The still voice of pathology tickles my ear,
And I laugh my revenge with pathology,
Understanding that we also shall death-rattle against the stars.
But I do not fear, nor does pathology,
For we are one with revenge,
And revenge is death
And death is truth.

I sing the glory of death,
The beauty and truth of death —
And I sing the glory of revenge.

YOU

By you all things are changed.
My friends and foes alike
Become as strangers without name,
Incredibly remote by your incredible nearness.
Their speech is foreign, their actions dream,
Echoes and shadows that pass but cannot claim.
In them whatever I learned of recognition and
acquaintance,
Whatever tenderness of glance, what sympathetic
touch,
You, you from them withdraw,
Essence of all I know and do and am.
Only memory paths me back to their far world;
Yet as I gaze happily through its twilit vista
The past itself stretches me-ward a path of new
astonishment,—
All, all its meaning was your sure approach.

HERTHA

She will grow
Beautiful.
Beauty will come to her
Given, like sun and rain;
Will go from her
Freely, like laughter.
She will be

Center, circumference to a great joy
Swiftly passing, repassing
Like water in and from a limpid well.
She is of the new generation, new;
Torch for the flame of passion,
Flame for the torch of love.

She will grow
Beautiful.
No, beauty itself will grow
Like her.

THE IDIOT

— Yes!
But as for me
I pass without debate of life and death,
Stumbling or dancing as the tune is pitched,
Not choosing, not remembering;
Dragging no chains and aiming for no star.
I know who frowns and grudges:
'Concentrate essence of inconstant moments,
The flower's soul, the fool's way his!'
And that may be.
But ever I peer about
Observing these anxious fretful folk, these moderns,
Tired Atlases who bear

A world of borrowed marble and stolen fame,—
I peer about, and ever as I pass
Touch softly each gleaming pillar, each smoking
shrine
And unperceived, drop tears upon them.
Tears.
For men are sleepers in a world of dream,
An unreal, staggering world,
That any moment, as I know,
Will break asunder, crashing, heaved apart
By bursting seeds of God's compelling spring,
Temple on temple, arch on arch
All staggering down and whelmed
In waters of eager thought, in flames of love;
Against which day I neither lock nor loose
Nor own nor will be owned within this doom
That with a few others undetached and free
My soul may cry:
'Lo God within this quickened earth
Plow under this yearning heart which I have borne
So many seasons, unfertile till you had sown.'
— — — Aye,
The fool's way mine.
Where is that Prophet crying within my heart?

HOMAGE

Before me you bowed as before an altar,
And I reached down and drew you to my bosom;
Proud of your reverence, and reverence returning,
But craving most your pleasure, not your awe.

My hands about your head curved themselves, as holding
A treasure, fragile and of glad possession!
Dear were the bones of your skull beneath my fingers,
And I grew brave imagining your defence.

Not as a man I felt you in my brooding,
But merely a babe,— a babe of my own body:
Precious your worth, but dearer your dependence:
Sometimes I wished to feed you at my breast.

Not to myself, I knew, belonged your homage:
I but the vessel of your holy drinking,
The channel to you of that olden wonder
Of love and womanhood,— I, but a woman.

Then never need your memory be shamefaced
That I have seen your flesh and soul at worship:
Do you think I did not kneel when you were kneeling?
Even lowlier bowed my head, and bowed my heart.

WOOD FEAR

Suddenly,
Far off,
The lights drew away;
The path stood still.
Out of the dark,
Noiseless, ominous,
The trunks of the trees towering came toward me;
Lifted themselves
Out of the dark into a great height
And came toward me.
Near,
Crowding upon me,
Closing in upon me like a wall of menace.

The long boughs stretched out to reach me;
They leaned toward me, through the blackness,
Slanting,
Slanting
To fall upon me. . . . . .

But now in a moment
The darkness grew light;
The boughs of the trees sank from the sky,
And were as before;
And I was walking as before
Quietly
Along the accustomed path
In the shadows.

PARK GOING TO SLEEP

The shadows under the trees
And in the vines by the boat-house
Grow dark,
And the lamps gleam softly.

On the street, far off,
The sound of the cars, rumbling,
Moves drowsily.
The rocks grow dim on the edges of the shore.

The boats with tired prows against the landing
Have fallen asleep heavily:
The monuments sleep
And the trees
And the smooth slow-winding empty paths sleep.

COIGNES

My elbow-knuckles
And the hollows under my knee-caps
Are curious places.
My heels are melancholy,
Dozing and drudging all day.
My toes have turned sullen
From never being amused.

RAYS

As I lie here
And you are moving through the room,—
From chair to window,
From closet to door —
My eye glances go following you,
Following close;
Touching and loving each separate movement of you;
Each little turn and step.

My glances reach out like beams,
Like radii from me to you.
They are shafts of light in my head,
That turn and point
And shift and follow,
Swinging through wide arcs
And small arcs,
Ever directing the rays of their beam
So that they fall on you.

And I see you clearly,
Intensely,
As if all else were darkness.

OLIVES

FINGERS

I've ten fingers
Very much admired,
I shall frame them
For they cannot do anything;
They cannot earn dinner
Or even hold a pebble . . .
Pebbles are pretty falling through them.

SHOE-STRING

Little old shoe,
You need a shoe-string;
I shall find one for you,
For without it you are helpless
As a man who studies regulations,
But with a yellow one
Like a woman who is bald.

BEAUTIFUL MIND

Oh, beautiful mind,
I lost it
In a lot of frying pans
And calendars and carpets
And beer bottles . . . .
Oh, my beautiful mind!

MIGGLES

Miggles —
That was his name,
Everyone always said,
"Miggles did it."
Oh, Miggles,
I admired you from the beginning,
Miggles!

A ROOM

It is a room that sets people thinking,
So they say,
Lighted like grandma's moonflowers . . .
Swish — I hear something in the corner,
Suddenly,
And I wish I were a cat.

BLUE UNDERSHIRTS

Blue undershirts,
Upon a line,
It is not necessary to say to you
Anything about it —
What they do,
What they might do . . . blue undershirts.

IN BED

I am tortured
By this borrowed mattress . . .
How do you lie,
Napoleon?

IN THE SQUARE

They made a statue
Of a general on horseback,
With his face turned nobly
Toward the crupper . . .
'Twas true
Of him
Quite half the time.

AT THE DOOR

I have only a tingling remembrance
Not of his eyes
But of
A dandelion . . .
Nevertheless,
The whole of him,
The whole of me,
There —
Known, elicited, understood.

ON THE TABLE

Little duck
Made of plaster,
With your head
Upon a spring,
When my hand trembles upon the table
You nod,
And when I chuckle too . . .
Such understanding,
C'est *henaurme!*

IN THE STREET

Dinky, slinky,
You must not wink
That way . . .
You hussy,
Do you forget I think
For both of us?

IN THE ORCHARD

This morning,
As the quince blossoms died,
The cherries were ripening . . .
Such are all your moments,
Little one.

SOME WHERE

Now I know
I have been eating apple-pie for breakfast
In the New England
Of your sexuality.

A MOON

It lasted a month,
We had one moon . . .
You took it for a baby
And when it cried
For a bib and a bottle,
All was over.

CONVENTION

Beware of a pirate who will scuttle your ship,
a cross-eyed toothless pirate!

I'll blow my great horn, carved of dead men's skulls,
right down your ear and freeze you.

I'll stick my big thumb into your eye
and my knife clean through your throat.

I'll pull out my goblet and drink your blood
while my foot rests on your belly.

I'll laugh a loud laugh that'll shunt your soul to hell
and spit on your face for an epitaph.

I'll kick your carcass to its coffin, the sea,
a sea that won't sing even a dirge for you.

Then I'll yank down the flag that you hoisted up so high
and raise the devil's own instead. . . .

Beware of a pirate who will scuttle your ship,
a cross-eyed toothless pirate!

I crawl aboard when your sails begin to fail —
the sails that are blown by the strength of your will.

MAN TELLS

Do you love that woman, sir?
Yes, that which I make of her.
Isn't she most beautiful?
Yes, because I think her so.
Hasn't she the best of hearts?
Yes, because I want it so.
Then there might be more like her?
Yes, the one you love.

WOMAN TELLS

I know that you do, but —
when last did you tell me?
I know that you gave, but —
what roses and roses!
I know that you will, but —
such kisses to go!
I know, yes, I know, but —
Begin!

VISTA

The snow,
ah yes, ah yes indeed,
is white and beautiful, white and beautiful,
verily beautiful —
from my window.
The sea,
ah yes, ah yes indeed,
is green and alluring, green and alluring,
verily alluring —
from the shore.
Love,
ah yes, ah yes, ah yes indeed,
verily yes, ah yes indeed!

THE WHIP OF THE UNBORN

It is not she who rends me so —
no, it is not she.
These eyes are not hers that hate me so —
no, they are not hers.
Nor this her breath that flaunts me,
nor these her arms that strangle —
no, these are not hers.

It is not I who rends me so —
no, it is not I.
This heart is not mine that goads me on —
no, this is not mine.
Nor these my thoughts that flay me,
nor this my soul that sneers me down —
no, these are not mine.

Nor that her whip that lashes me,
nor that my whip that lashes me —
no, this is not ours.

LITTLE FOLK

Of late,
I've been craving a child,
the adoption of a child.
Not a child of mine —
I have so little blood for that,
and that requires two —
but an ordinary child,
like myself,
who will be serious with me,
playfully,
and play with me,
seriously —
I have quarts of blood for that.
Little One:
Will you adopt me?

TO H. S.

Those people out there
moving about in mist,
dancing mist,
dancing blue-gray mist,
gravely gay dancing mist —
(or do they do the dancing?)
are always coming so close to you,
you're always going so close to them —
but you never touch.

Don't you love them?
Queer beautiful things.
Mist people.
Moving mist people.
Dancing mist people.
You ought to —
you're one of them.

EARTH WISDOM

Said the earth:
I love you, flower.
Go up and see the sun.
And feel the rain — it's soft.
Winds will play with you,
merry winds.
But see that great blue —
I like that round blue —
I want that high blue —

Said the earth:
I love you, flower.
It is late.
Come back to me.
I don't want to —
I won't —
I want the moon —
I want —

You've been playing too long, flower.
That isn't good for you.
Nor fair to the morrow.
Come,
said the earth.

IMPROVISATION

Wind:
Why do you play
that long beautiful adagio,
that archaic air,
to-night?
Will it never end?
Or is it the beginning,
some prelude you seek?
Is it a tale you strum?
Yesterday, yesterday —
Have you no more for us?

Wind:
Play on.
There is nor hope
nor mutiny
in you.

A SWORD

A million-bladed sword,
slashing the petty pates
and sticking the smug stomachs of the past
till the pink blood dribble
and, with a roar of ribald song,
a whirlwind of naked dance,
flaunting the laughing boyish present on a pike
against the stare and whisper of the doddering future —
a sword is love!

TOWARD LOVE

That beauty has begun to fall out of step
is no excuse,
that others have begun their skulking to the rear
is no excuse,
you who are beginning to compromise
or to seek Some Other.
Crucify Nature!

VARIATIONS

WIZARDRY

Your hands,
so strong,
so cool,
wizards
improvising sleep
. . .

VARIATION

Till you came —
I was I.

CARESS

It was as though one of those trees —
the very tallest of them,
that compassionate one —
had bent over me for a moment.

MARCH

The air is drenched with the noise of wind.
I with the noise of you.

WILLOWS

This amphitheater of willows
praying that tarn,
are my mes
in constant attendance
on you.

CONTRA MUNDUM

There is one sanctuary
that is never shut —
to you.

PER CONTRA

Don't weep.
There is sanctuary
from me,
as well.
Come.

PRIEST

I burn candles,
candles —
and no two alike —
at an altar.

OVERHEARD IN AN ASYLUM

And here we have another case,
quite different from the last,
another case quite different —
Listen.

Baby, drink.
The war is over.
Mother's breasts
are round with milk.

Baby, rest.
The war is over.
Only pigs
slop over so.

Baby, sleep.
The war is over.
Daddy's come
with a German coin.

Baby, dream.
The war is over.
You'll be a soldier
too.

We gave her the doll —
Now there we have another case,
quite different from —

LOVE SONGS

I

Spawn of fantasies
Sitting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting erotic garbage
"Once upon a time"
Pulls a weed white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous membrane
I would an eye in a Bengal light
Eternity in a sky-rocket
Constellations in an ocean
Whose rivers run no fresher
Than a trickle of saliva

.

There are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal to the bellows
Of experience
Colored glass.

II

The skin-sack
In which a wanton duality
Packed
All the completions of my infructuous impulses
Something the shape of a man
To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
More of a clock-work mechanism
Running down against time
To which I am not paced
My finger-tips are numb from fretting your hair
A God's door-mat
On the threshold of your mind.

III

We might have coupled
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment
Or broken flesh with one another
At the profane communion table
Where wine is spilled on promiscuous lips

We might have given birth to a butterfly
With the daily news
Printed in blood on its wings.

IV

Once in a *mezzanino*
The starry ceiling
Vaulted an unimaginable family
Bird-like abortions
With human throats
And wisdom's eyes
Who wore lamp-shade red dresses
And woolen hair

One bore a baby
In a padded *porte-enfant*
Tied with a sarsanet ribbon
To her goose's wings
But for the abominable shadows
I would have lived
Among their fearful furniture
To teach them to tell me their secrets
For I had guessed mine
That if I should find YOU
And bring you with me
The brood would be swept clean out.

SUNDAY MORNING

I have come out here into the woods
Because there are hob-nails in my shoes,
And because the people I saw in the town back there
were so spick and span
(Even the rosy little tot with his wide, white collar)
And because there are so many churches in the town.

I have come out here into the woods.

The great oak is not spick and span
And the little oak does not wear a wide, white collar.
And none of us,
Not the stone,
Nor the wood-mouse,
Nor I,
Wrangles over the meaning of printer's ink in heavy
books.

THE THIEF

This man, then, is very much like God.
The scoundrel.

One can excuse omnipotence in deity
(An arm gone, or a friend dead,
And one need not even be a Presbyterian to say:
God wills it).

I say, having made a God, one can forgive Him.

But this man, who by bowing before a minister
Can take the girl,
Body, mind and soul,
And build about her unassailable eternal ramparts
Against the world —
This man is a sort of God.
The scoundrel.

But he is tangible
And waxes hot and cold
And fears hell —

There is no forgiveness.

SATISFACTION

How could any god be happy
With only one hell?
Why, even a dog has different teeth
To crush this flea or that flea.

POEMS OF WISTFULNESS

I. WANDERER

Why do ye find me in these waters?

Well, the old wander-dog in me whined;
So we came,
Baying at the moon,
Wistfully over the world.

II. SOMNAMBULIST

Last night I went a-walking with my dreams —
Folk such as ye ha' never seen the like of,
With faces like moonlight on water,
Wistful folk.
One of them had eyes
The color of will-o'-the-wisp,
And another had hair
The color of wind.
We walked in silence
In a grey wood
Until dawn.

TO STATECRAFT EMBALMED

There is nothing to be said for you. Guard
Your secret. Conceal it under your " hard
  Plumage," necromancer.
    O
Bird, whose " tents " were " awnings of Egyptian
Yarn," shall Justice' faint, zigzag inscription —
  Leaning like a dancer —
    Show
The pulse of its once vivid sovereignty?
You say not, and transmigrating from the
  Sarcophagus, you wind
    Snow
Silence round us and with moribund talk,
Half limping and half ladified, you stalk
  About. Ibis, we find
    No
Virtue in you — alive and yet so dumb.
Discreet behavior is not now the sum
  Of statesmanlike good sense.
    Though
It were the incarnation of dead grace?
As if a death mask ever could replace
  Life's faulty excellence!
    Slow
To remark the steep, too strict proportion
Of your throne, you'll see the wrenched distortion
  Of suicidal dreams.

Go
Staggering toward itself and with its bill,
Attack its own identity, until
Foe seems friend and friend seems
Foe.

TO A FRIEND IN THE MAKING

You wild, uncooked young fellow!
The swinkèd hind will stumble home
Not looking at the tasks he scorned to shirk.
Impelled to respite by rough hands,
The labored ox will bellow;
While you stand there agape before your handi-
work.

Not all good men are mellow.
You savor of a walnut rind,
Of oak leaves, or plucked mullein on the brae.
And yet with all your clumsiness,
You give me pleasure, fellow;
Your candor compensates me for my old bou-
quet.

BLAKE

I wonder if you feel as you look at us,
As if you were seeing yourself in a mirror at the end
Of a long corridor — walking frail-ly.
I am sure that we feel as we look at you,
As if we were ambiguous and all but improbable
Reflections of the sun — shining pale-ly.

GEORGE MOORE

In speaking of ' aspiration,'
From the recesses of a pen more dolorous than
blackness itself,
Were you presenting us with one more form of
imperturbable French drollery,
Or was it self directed banter?
Habitual ennui
Took from you, your invisible, hot hel-
met of anæmia —
While you were filling your " little glass "
from the decanter
Of a transparent-murky, would-be-truth-
ful " hobohemia "—
And then facetiously
Went off with it? Your soul's supplanter,
The spirit of good narrative, flatters you, con-
vinced that in reporting briefly
One choice incident, you have known beauty other
than that of stys, on
Which to fix your admiration.

So far as the future is concerned,
" Shall not one say, with the Russian philosopher,
' How is one to know what one doesn't know? ' "
So far as the present is concerned,

If external action is effete
And rhyme is outmoded,
I shall revert to you,
Habakkuk, as on a recent occasion I was goaded
Into doing, by XY, who was speaking of unrhymed verse.
This man said — I think that I repeat
His identical words:
" Hebrew poetry is
Prose with a sort of heightened consciousness.
' Ecstasy affords
The occasion and expediency determines the form.' "

HELLENICA

I.

Cleon doth not forget the gentle footsteps
Of Scylla, a little maiden,
Who returneth not unto her father's dwelling,
But walketh the long descent into the silence
Tired and alone.

II.

Rhodoclea, whose body veiled the sun,
Hath fallen into shadow
Under the grasses.

III.

Plato's passion troubled Timon's soul.
His body followed beauty to the end.
Sunlight sifts across his earthy bed.

IV.

Comatas dreameth of music in soft pastures.
His fellow-shepherds have laid his pipe beside him.

V.

Maidenly Bacchis wove her wedding tunic.
Now it lies in the dust
That claspeth her loveliness.

VI.

Myrrha, whose body was clearer than light on water,
Remembereth not her beauty
In the stillness.

THE TEA SHOP

The girl in the tea shop
    is not so beautiful as she was,
The August has worn against her.
She does not get up the stairs so eagerly,
Yes, she also will turn middle-aged,
And the glow of youth that she spread about us
    as she brought us our muffins
She will spread about us no longer.
    She also will turn middle-aged.

PHYLIDULA

Phylidula is scrawny but amorous,
Thus have the gods awarded her
That in pleasure she receives more than she can give,
If she does not count this blessed
Let her change her religion.

THE PATTERNS

Erinna is a model parent,
Her children have never discovered her adulteries.

Lalage is also a model parent,
Her offspring are fat and happy.

SHOP GIRL

For a moment she rested against me
Like a swallow half blown to the wall,
And they talk of Swinburne's women,
And the shepherdess meeting with Guido,
And the harlots of Baudelaire.

ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE

She was as pale as one
Who has just produced an abortion.

Her face was beautiful as a delicate stone
With the sculptor's dust still on it.

And yet I was glad that it was you and not I
Who had removed her from her first husband.

CODA

O my songs,
Why do you look so eagerly and so curiously into
people's faces,
Will you find your lost dead among them?

CHANSON TRISTE

My heart is sorrowful and my dreams are broken,
The light of the sun shines not upon my house.

I went into the forest
Treading the dry leaves
And I saw two gleaming black eyes.

I thought it was a tiger
And my bones cried out in terror.

I thought it was a snake
And my soul writhed in anguish.

I stumbled on a wet tree-root
And fell fainting into the morass,
The green toads croaked at me
The mud oozed round my belly . . .
I turned and saw
Two black gleaming eyes . . .

My heart is sorrowful and my dreams are broken,
The light of the sun shines not upon my house.

L'ARBRE MYSTIQUE

The slender tree
Has leaves that droop like little folds of silk;
Their delicate green
Melts into the blackness of the night.

Passing beneath
I seem to feel soft touches on my cheek
As though invisible wings
Or the stretching hands of some body-searching spirit
Brushed past me.

My soul
Disintegrates;
Like a wave driven by the wind
It bursts.
Each spark
Flies up
To find a body in the silent leaves.

RAPIÈRE À DEUX POINTS

(TO G. K.)

Your eyes
are like two flames
dancing
on the carved surface
of a gem.

THREE DIMENSIONS

Several small houses
Discreetly separated by foliage
And the night —
Maintaining their several identities
By light

Which fills the inside of each —
Not as masses they stand
But as walls
Enclosing and excluding
Like shawls

About little old women —
What mystery hides within
What curiosity lurks without
One the other
Knows nothing about.

KALEIDOSCOPICS

Gondolas with white freightage
Passed,
And muted barcaroles
Destroyed old houses.

The iridescent plush rope sways
With the rhythm
Of an old canzone of Genoa.

He died.
Let us dance elegant fandangos
In blues and golds,
And consort
With blinder things than parchment bats
To gather dripping garlands
Of mottled toadstools
To show the hate we loved him with.

Weave together delicate preludes
And stitch in faint cords
Of simple colors
Like gray,
But let us not be betrayed
Beyond beginnings.

The hunchbacked windmill
Grunts,
And the crows caw and creak
Like old leather
And buffet the twisted gnarled darkness
Hour on hour.

Trinn! Trinn!
Do you hear it?
Like a crystal ball
Split into diamonds
And flung like hailstones
Against tarnished spears:
Trinn! Trinn!

Fourteen queens:
Seven in gold,
Five in green,
And two
Are covered each
With an old-rose
Silk sari
Dotted with vermilion discs
And fringed with dusty gold.
My knees
Crack together when I would go
To one or to the other
Like the fray of slave oars
When two old Asian galleys
Clashed.

Twelve years
Through the mandarin's red coat
I pursued
The white thistle,
And bit at swaying ends
Of snapped gold threads.

Four jaundiced ghouls
Hide in your gray lips
Where the red plum-tree
Is bent
In a haggard arch.

"OTHERS"

We will sit in spiders' corners
And lure shadows into our game
To do as we wish.
Vowels opening like salmon parasols
Against green embroidery,
Consonants that chime
As clearly as rhine glasses clinking!

TWILIGHT I

Columbine, Harlequin and Pierrot sit relaxed in arm-chairs in a wide white room.

Columbine sits swinging her legs.
It grows gradually darker.
They sit as though waiting.
Creepers swing against the window.
It grows darker.
They sit as though waiting.
It grows darker.
Only the windows and the white linen of Pierrot and Columbine can now be seen.
Harlequin a faint blur.
It grows darker.
Pierrot and Columbine show faintly. The easy-chairs are rocks of shadow.
They sit as though waiting. . .
The creepers grow larger and swing against the windows.
It grows darker.

THE LUNATIC

Columbine is seated on a kitchen chair before a wide French window which looks onto a terrace overhanging the edge of the world. The room is very large but the wall paper is drab like a slum room. In a corner is an iron bedstead covered with very white blankets. It is a warm night.

The moon can be seen rising.
Columbine sits still, relaxed and brooding.
The rising moon touches her naked arms.
She looks round, startled and shivering.
Then folds her arms over her breast.
Then rises and walks in front of the window in extreme agitation.
After a while she grows calmer and returns to the chair, seating herself.
She remains quiet a few moments, but the moonbeams pierce her.
They shine on her bare arms.
She trembles, raising them and looking at them curiously . . . and lifts them slowly, suddenly kissing them.
Then falls a-trembling.

She rises and walks up and down in great agitation.
When she grows quieter, she returns to her chair.
The moonbeams fall full on her and again she

raises her arms to her lips, kissing them.
She folds her arms tightly across her breast, rocking herself.
She opens the window wide, leaning out as though exhausted.
The moonbeams strike her. She becomes very excited.
She walks in front of the window to and fro.
Then seats herself on the chair.
The moonbeams are in another corner of the room and she sits relaxed and brooding.

THE DUTCH DOLLS

"*Hi, Hi, Hi. . . .*"— *Verlaine*

To young men, who, being loved, therefrom engender within them a true passion, enduring nobly its heats and its chills and the vagaries of mistresses under the phases of the moon.

Who, seeing each new incident with the most intimate and disillusioning psychology, yet remain silent; and having suffered with what noble forbearance, learn they are reviled therefor.

Gentlemen, The Dutch Dolls!

Pierrot

To-morrow will pass like other days.
Fear, hate, anger,
and at times. . . .
peace.
This till I'm with her.
Then pain, anger, contempt,
and in rare moments,
peace.

Through it all this pitiless unrest
will hold me fast,
till I must go
terrified and blank,
sombre like this street,
these lowering houses,
and she who watches
from trivial curtains
my footfalls sucked into eternity.

Her first love

Leaning over her while she lay
thrown back across my knees, . . .
I bruised her lips
and the small hard breasts
with strainings and caresses.

She does not move. . .
says nothing
Is she wondering what it all means?

But now and then her eyes water, their lids droop,
and her lips quiver.
Her face grows darker. . .
She strains me to her desperately. . .

It's hard to know what these young girls want!

Going home

Come with me to the station!
No!
You don't love me.
Oh. . .
Come then!
"When you go I want to cry."
His own eyes watered, and he felt for the handle of
the door.
How empty the room would be when he'd gone.
The idea oppressed him.
A wild straining each to each.
Don't go!
He freed himself
Ah, No! No!
But he said sadly, you can't keep me.
She went out of the room with averted head.

He knew her eyes would follow him down the street,
but he did not look back at the window.
She might wave to him . . . who left her thus
forever —
Forever. . .
Ah. . . till to-morrow.

Backtalk

It's you, I love, only you!
What then?
You, you, only you!
As much as other men.
You, you, only you!
Come then!
You, you, ah . . . as much as other men.

The Moonmaiden

Come!
No!
I will give you a white horse.
No!
I will give you a white baby.
No!
I will give you a white house.
No!
I will give you my own white dead body.
No! it's cold, get my cloak.

. . . . . .

Damn you, Columbine.
Then they didn't 'core you.

(She weeps.)

Interlude — Nostalgie de l'infini

You tangoed with him
on the lawn
in the moon,
and I smiled.

At times you'd be strong,
walk to me.
You did not think I shook;
hated you.

And when you'd dance with me,
I went away.

Why do you tell me these years after,
you wept for a long night?

The plot thickens

I laid upon my love
the spell of the kiss,
and left her to her bitter pain.

Outside was Carnival.

When I returned
she was gone.
The night was cold
but I slept warm,
for I said
she sleeps more cold than I.

That my love should leave me
hurts me nothing;
But that the spell of my kiss
might thus easily be broken,
I am ashamed.

The Emperor's Nightingale

It's only you I love,
she says,
and cannot say aught else.
Poor " Emperor's nightingale."

You, you, ah you,
she sighs.

But yet, when I " go off,"
she'll fling her kisses
for all the gallery to snarl upon,
And so " come off "
and rapt
will pass me on the stairs.

Celtic!

We danced, poor fools, on the world's edge.

Because I saw her nimble legs
clean against the sky,
now there is no thing will give me ease.

I'll find again that edge of the world
whereon she dances.

Poor fool! she dances on the world's edge.

The compassionate pilgrim

I laughed,
chatted gaily;
was most attentive
to the foil I'd brought to pique you.
You'd no notion.

And though you laughed,
I saw through it
and was not hurt.

After,
you stood silent, lone
most pitiful.

All this trouble
because I could not kiss you
in the crowded room.

You wanted to keep me
But they'd not let you,
and you gave way.
Now I'm gone
and you're a memory.
Silent, lone,
most pitiful.

The Betrayal

This face is mine,
Hollow and line.
The same, yet bitter wine
I'm drunk upon.

'Twas held by one
Who falsely spun
A web of love,
Below, above.

Yet it will prove
Her evil, should she turn,
But see the lips agirn,
Sad eyes, that burn, that burn.

Excuses himself for being concerned at her going

I've written enough to you,
about you
and because of you;
and dragged your beauty into too much light.

Now I'll nurse an aching heart
and with no outlet for the pain
will crush it under.
I'll forget you in a while
remembering you're nothing.

When I was young,
child of the sun,
imminent with fire
I did not write of women.

But you have taken the ichor from my veins,
You have watered the vitriol of my brain.

Day-Dreamings

You'll be sorry later on —
for I'll come back
and, chancing on you in some public place,
you'll tremble. I'll be bronzed;
contempt upon my face;
ah . . . not for you,
only that I'll have seen strong men dying.
She that's fairest will be on my arm
and in my pocket a thousand pounds.

You'll laugh . . .
in spasms of fear . . . your eyes will go blank . .
and I'll not sleep for thinking of you
wide-eyed at his side.

In Defence

If I'd not burnt your letters as they came
for fear their weight of love would stifle me,
for fear when I'd grown old
my children or my love would find them,
or older still
the pitiful scrawl across the pages
would mad me with the longing —
. . . all the pain of youth that passes . . .
Would I have thus forgot them all —
remembering the half of a phrase,
the splash of a tear.

But you kept my letters
and those I wrote most passionate
when I had ceased to love you,
you showed most proudly. .

Therefore your friends think
'Poets' oh they're but human
to let themselves be scorned so by mere woman.

Columbine becomes "advanced"

I hate you!
Kiss me!
Now I really hate you!
Kiss me!
There . . . you see.

Oh . . . how I hate you now.

You're dull, Columbine,
Good Night!

EPITHALAMION — A Dance to Words

First bridesmaid speaks:

The little yellow flower
The silver girl
With bubbling shower
Of curl on falling curl
On breast of slippery pearl
With mouth of little baby child
And eyes by passion half beguiled
That droop afraid to show
The little that they know
Of boy
And joy
Is now a golden statue, a fair bride,
The petals of her virgin heart spread wide.

Second bridesmaid speaks:

So motionless she stands
With quiet feet and hands
Her mouth is now a woman's mouth
Her eyes are wise with instinct law
Her soul perceives what Eve first saw
In East and West, in North and South
In budding root
In pregnant fruit,
The good of Life
The marriage love of man and wife.

Third bridesmaid speaks:

The little nymph ran deep in wood
And where a weeping willow stood
With tearful leaves on sighing boughs
She hung with parted lips
And finger tips
Pressed warm on dewy brows —
But he the hunter came
Made heaven loud with her name
And caught the little downy thing
With body sweet as spring
And suddenly, how could it be?
She was a prouder thing than he
For he must take while she will give
The future god for which they live —
Happy husband, kiss her now
On fiery lips and frozen brow —

SPRING

A Ballet to Words Danced by Five Dancers, Three Girls and Two Children

Earth like a butterfly
Leaps in gold
From its chrysalis old
And stiff and cold.

A frail pale sky
On the brink of dissolving in dreams
Covers the year's new birth;
While a passionless sun spinning beams
To recapture the heart of the earth —
Half daring, half shy,
Looking ready to die,
Like a sigh,
If a violent wind went by —
Marries earth to the sky.

The grass breaks in ripples of flowers,
In purple and chrome,
As a sea breaks in foam;
And the lilacs in fountains and showers
Of emerald rain, fling
Their tiny green buds on the wing —
Just poised on the edge of the spring —
To fly
Bye and bye,
To burst into loveliness airily fair,
In garlands for dryads to weave in their hair,
In a virginal dance
With a scent to entrance
The sweet fickle air —
And late when the evening
Comes subtle and blue,
And stars are all opening

Hearts of bright dew —
The sun will slip easily,
Tenderly,
Bright,
Out of sight,
More silver than gold
To behold —
Not as in summer he dies,
When low in the West he lies
In the sanguine flood
Of his own heart's blood,
Shot by the shaft of the maiden moon,
With regret in his eyes
That the amazon comes too soon.

And my little son
Has run
From me
To the flowery hills to the dappled sea;
For somebody told him that shepherds in spring
Taste the new green sap of the old green trees,
And pluck a feather from the wing
Of a throstle
While they sing,
All together,
In a ring,
And toss it up into the breeze;
And their brains

Go mad with the ecstasy coursing their veins,
And they wreathe them in violets, dance them in dew,
Till their ankles are blue,
Through and through
Enchantingly cold with sweet pains —
While the sun in the clouds
Gold-dapples the sheep,
Till the stars in bright crowds
Tempt the shepherds to sleep;
Who with eyes, wild dark,
And hair like a flame,
Singing still like the lark,
Cry loud on the name
Of each his Corinna to come and be tame
To his love,
Like a dove;

And their sheep
Turn to silver — and sleep.
And my little boy
With his young spring joy
Will not discover the leanness of truth;
With the magical,
Tragical,
Credence of youth
He will think the sane shepherds he meets on his way
Are mad to-morrow
To his sorrow,
Or yesterday.

VIE DE BORDEAUX, SAUCE SUPRÊME

(*To E. L.*)

Noon of the morn,
Golden,
Breeze-laden.

Fleet the hours
That carried me
Knowing and knowing not
The whither and when.
The hours connived,
Divining the road, devised the goal,
Spared me the dissonant collapse,
Mad-cap conspirators in laughter of flight,
Winking at mortal ecstasy,
Plotters of heavenly interlude.

Quivering like withdrawing wings
The day rose into night
Insensibly.
In my upper room I sat in the half-light
Looking out on the drab roofs,
Tiling, gutters, chimneys, chimney pots —
Everywhere behind the clay tremulous sapphire deepening.

I was tranquil, grew pensive,
Content of my chair —

In contemplation,
Perilous for ecstasy.
Suddenly,
Over my right shoulder,
Without design,
I looked straight at the young moon,
Perpendicular,
Peeping through the sky
Like a maiden that would.

My heart *did* bound,
And I went down into the Quinconces,
Sahara of parks, but for its trees
In flanking, vitiated ranks,
Sand and more sand
Beneath its ugly trees,
Its worm-gnawed, desolate trees,
Dropping a tainted leafage shamelessly
Though the night was summer,
Ruin and curse of trees, ignoble, scrawny,
Mercifully obscured by the night.

It is *the* park
And does not lack for benches.
There are even metal chairs —
In the daytime they are let out for hire —
" Deux sous, s'il vous plaît "—
If you happen to sit down on one,
But at night they are quite free.

So at night one goes to the Quinconces
Inevitably,
And one is several and sometimes many,
But when the moon is a maid,
Young and discreet,
One in the Quinconces by night,
May easily be two.

But never before the night of that young moon
Did two in the Quinconces
To me
Mean
You.

Oh —
I was full of the god that day,
The droll,
The secret
God!

SOUL OF THE LOTUS

(*To Hasegawa*)

I

A white lamp,
hanging —
In its mouth a pink pearl
of flame —
Swinging
by three strands of light. . .
A pool beneath,
Quaint and secret as mud. . .

II

Animate,
Winged for escape
To the cupped hand of night
Scooping pink and green stars
Out of unknown abysses,
The lotus —

But there's the stem, hinting,
Tale-telling of some old connection,
Some scandal forgotten,
In the past of the taciturn mud;

Over whose face —

Or is it a face
Under the mask of cool water?

The lotus
looks and fades upward,
Tirelessly murmuring,
Politely concealing impatience,
Like a lady reminding a dolt:
" Please, you have caught in the door
A slip of my skirt;
Let me loose,
I must go."

LENTO

Two children walking.

So slow their walk,
So like a sleepy wind their talk —

Arm sagging at the other's waist,
Close as leaves fallen on wet grass —

Their slippers follow oily waves of heat,
Lazy as gorged fishes,
Lazy as minutes
Swimming in the silence of an empty house
In midsummer —

The drifting yellow ashes of the sun
cover their hair —

So slow they are,
The drowsy seconds settle on their shoulders
and fold wings —

And one small footstep sings
To the next one
A lullaby —

The hours wait them at the gate,
Sighing,
As the little feet tick by.

THE WATER-FRONT

On the checker-board,
Sky squares and water squares —

Tipsy tugs,
pert stacks,
queening at the dock. . .

On the checker-board,
Black sea,
White sky,
kissing corners. . .

Slow steam squirms,
eludes the air. . .

Oh the salty little clams.
Sniffing!

THE SNAKE PASSES

Three little children afoot in the grass;
Getting rich in daisies,
Clutching red burdens of clover,
Playing at rivalry
With skeltering flocks of mad blossoms,
Mirth-shaken, flung by the whisk of the wings
Of the tipsying wind
Into the hands of the children.

Three pennies falling
And lost in the grass. . .
Three flushed children,
Panting covetous,
Pulling the grass apart;

Withering flowers trampled by the feet
of little beasts.

A sullen boy with two pennies
Clenched in his grimy fist;
And a little girl crying,
And one stunned with disappointment.

So I did not throw the pennies,
But passed,
And after me fell as rain ceasing
The dropping spray of cool voices,
And silvery flecks of tone
Of the grass,
Parted by children in play.

TIDAL GOSSIP

With a kick of white lace
The ruffled waves
Flirt to the winking sun;
Minding not
the stodgy sleeper,

Whose eye is turned inward
Upon intestinal ructions.

(Despite the fact,
He is their consort.)

But then,
One must do something
To turn the flying edge
of the sickle,
While waiting
the cold sweet lover,
Whose head
on a silver platter
Makes terrible the night.

MAUVE

The rhythm of the sea
Is blent in undulations of gray satin. . .

The ashes of burned violets drift
over a sky. . .
And blurred,
a magical seed of light
Breaks in the whorls of a strange flower!

Did you ever see a flower
With core of tarnished silver
and five black petals?

CHILD

The young child, Christ, is straight and wise
And asks questions of the old men, questions
Found under running water for all children
And found under shadows thrown on still waters
By tall trees looking downward, old and gnarled,
Found to the eyes of children alone, untold,
Singing a low song in the loneliness.
And the young child, Christ, goes on asking
And the old men answer nothing and only know love
For the young child, Christ, straight and wise.

STATISTICS

Napoleon shifted
Restless in the old sarcophagus
And murmured to a watchguard:
"Who goes there?"
"Twenty-one million men,
Soldiers, armies, guns,
Twenty-one million
Afoot, horseback,
In the air,
Under the sea."
And Napoleon turned to his sleep:
"It is not my world answering;
It is some dreamer who knows not

The world I marched in
From Calais to Moscow."
And he slept on
In the old sarcophagus
While the aeroplanes
Droned their motors
Between Napoleon's mausoleum
And the cool night stars.

LOUIS MAYER'S ICE PICTURES

"ICY SHORES"

Why has the sea hurled itself on the land
Now that summer is gone
And winter is the big player?
Neither is the winner.
Both strugglers, sea and land,
Are locked in a standstill.
Only the ice is a victim.
It happened to be caught between.
So the ledges are crumpled . . broken playthings.
They are equal to a toy town of blocks
Kicked over by children
Who are gone away.

"WALRUS BAY"

High banks with a hard feel to them
Stand up from a slow plash of gray waves.

Humped rocks too
And looking twice at the humped rocks
We see they are not walrus playing tag
As we guessed at first.
No life of blood, throat and nostril
Runs under them; they are granite
Heaved up years ago to companion the sea.

"SOLITUDE"

I can have this cool loneliness
And you can take along what you want
Here of this cool loneliness.
It is not like prairie land
Nor a single crag
Nor a level of ocean.
Little hills around it
Keep off winter,
The big rough player.
A disc of cool loneliness,
I always ask it:
What are you waiting for?
It seems so sure somebody is coming.

BECKER

Becker sat in a chair and they killed him; I don't care.
Becker sat in a chair talking to God about his immortal soul and calling, "Jesus, save my soul"; I don't care.

Becker hired pimps and dope-fiends to shoot a squealing gambler at noon on a crowded street; I don't care.

Becker told the pimps and dope-fiends he'd keep the coppers from pinching them for croaking Rosenthal; I don't care.

A lot of girls driven onto the night streets, driven into saloon back rooms, driven to hangouts of thieves,

Tired of the coin paid 'em in stores and factories, peddled their bodies and legs and breasts to men for a dollar and two dollars

And some of them died of the syph, some of them turned dips and boosters, some of them took to coke and whiskey and went bugs —

And Becker, well, he went fifty-fifty with pimps, dicks, landlords and politicians — God-damn Becker and all higher-ups who use stool pigeons, fixers and go-betweens to wash blood off blood-money before it gets to them.

PETER QUINCE AT THE CLAVIER

I

Just as my fingers on these keys
Make music, so the self-same sounds
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music. It is like the strain
Waked in the elders by Susanna:

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
She bathed in her still garden, while
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green water, clear and warm,
Susanna lay,
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings.

She sighed,
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood
In the cool
Of spent emotions.
She felt, among the leaves,
The dew
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,
Still quavering.
The winds were like her maids,
On timid feet,
Fetching her woven scarves,
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand
Muted the night.
She turned —
A cymbal crashed,
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines,
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind —
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing.
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of Winter, done repenting.
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now, in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

THE SILVER PLOUGH-BOY

A black figure dances in a black field.
It seizes a sheet — from the ground, from a bush — as if spread there by some wash-woman for the night.
It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver.
It dances down a furrow, in the early light, back of a crazy plough, the green blades following.
How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black figure slips from the wrinkled sheet! How softly the sheet falls to the ground!

SIX SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPES

I.

An old man sits
In the shadow of a pine tree
In China.
He sees larkspur,
Blue and white,
At the edge of the shadow,
Move in the wind.
His beard moves in the wind.
The pine tree moves in the wind.
Thus water flows
Over weeds.

II.

The night is of the color
Of a woman's arm:
Night, the female,
Obscure,
Fragrant and supple,
Conceals herself,
A pool shines,
Like a bracelet
Shaken in a dance.

III.

I measure myself
Against a tall tree.
I find that I am much taller,
For I reach right up to the sun,
With my eye;
And I reach to the shore of the sea
With my ear.
Nevertheless, I dislike
The way the ants crawl
In and out of my shadow.

IV.

When my dream was near the moon,
The white folds of its gown
Filled with yellow light.

The soles of its feet
Grew red.
Its hair filled
With certain blue crystallizations
From stars,
Not far off.

V.

Not all the knives of the lamp-posts,
Nor the chisels of the long streets,
Nor the mallets of the domes
And high towers,
Can carve
What one star can carve,
Shining through the grape-leaves.

VI.

Rationalists, wearing square hats,
Think, in square rooms,
Looking at the floor,
Looking at the ceiling.
They confine themselves
To right-angled triangles.
If they tried rhomboids,
Cones, waving lines, ellipses —
As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon —
Rationalists would wear sombreros.

THE FLORIST WEARS KNEE-BREECHES

My flowers are reflected
In your mind
As you are reflected in your glass.
When you look at them,
There is nothing in your mind
Except the reflections
Of my flowers.
But when I look at them
I see only the reflections
In your mind,
And not my flowers.
It is my desire
To bring roses,
And place them before you
In a white dish.

TATTOO

The light is like a spider.
It crawls over the water.
It crawls over the edges of the snow.
It crawls under your eyelids
And spreads its webs there —
Its two webs.

The webs of your eyes
Are fastened
To the flesh and bones of you
As to rafters or grass.

There are filaments of your eyes
On the surface of the water
And in the edges of the snow.

SONG

There are great things doing
In the world,
Little rabbit.
There is a damsel,
Sweeter than the sound of the willow,
Dearer than shallow water
Flowing over pebbles.
Of a Sunday,
She wears a long coat,
With twelve buttons on it.
Tell that to your mother.

INSCRIPTION FOR A MONUMENT

To the imagined lives
Evoked by music,
Creatures of horns, flutes, drums,
Violins, bassoons, cymbals —

Nude porters that glistened in Burma
Defiling from sight;
Island philosophers spent
By long thought beside fountains;
Big-bellied ogres curled up in the sunlight,
Stuttering dreams. . . .

BOWL

For what emperor
Was this bowl of Earth designed?
Here are more things
Than on any bowl of the Sungs,
Even the rarest —
Vines that take
The various obscurities of the moon,
Approaching rain
And leaves that would be loose upon the wind,
Pears on pointed trees,
The dresses of women,
Oxen. . . .
I never tire
To think of this.

DOMINATION OF BLACK

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding —
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry — the peacocks.

Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,

Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks?

Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.
I felt afraid —
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

PASTORAL

The little sparrows
Hop ingenuously
About the pavement
Quarreling
With sharp voices
Over those things
That interest them.
But we who are wiser
Shut ourselves in
On either hand
And no one knows
Whether we think good
Or evil.
Then again,
The old man who goes about
Gathering dog lime
Walks in the gutter
Without looking up
And his tread
Is more majestic than
That of the Episcopal minister
Approaching the pulpit
Of a Sunday.
These things
Astonish me beyond words.

THE OGRE

Sweet child,
Little girl with well shaped legs
You cannot touch the thoughts
I put over and under and around you.
This is fortunate for they would
Burn you to an ash otherwise.
Your petals would be quite curled up.

But this is all beyond you — no doubt.
Yet you do feel the brushings
Of the fine needles:
The tentative lines of your whole body
Prove it to me:
So does your fear of me,
Your shyness:
Likewise the toy baby cart
That you are pushing —
And besides, mother has begun
To dress your hair in a knot.
These are my excuses.

PASTORAL

If I say I have heard voices
Who will believe me?

"None has dipped his hand
In the black waters of the sky

Nor picked the yellow lilies
That sway on their clear stems
And no tree has waited
Long enough nor still enough
To touch fingers with the moon."

I looked and there were little frogs
With puffed out throats,
Singing in the slime.

APPEAL

You who are so mighty,
Crimson salamander,
Hear me once more.

I lay among the half burned sticks
At the edge of the fire.
The fiend was creeping in.
I felt the cold tips of fingers —.

O crimson salamander!

Give me one little flame,
One!
That I may bind it
Protectingly about the wrist
Of him that flung me here,
Here upon the very center!

This is my song.

TRACT

I will teach you
my townspeople
how to perform
a funeral —
for you have it
over a troop
of artists —
unless one should
scour the world —
you have the ground sense
necessary.
See! the hearse leads
I begin with
a design for a hearse.
For Christ's sake
not black —
nor white either —
and not polished!
Let it be weathered —
like a farm wagon —
with gilt wheels
(this could be
applied fresh
at small expense)
or no wheels at all
a rough dray to
drag over the ground.

Knock the glass out!
My God — glass,
my townspeople!
For what purpose?
Is it for the dead
to look out or
for us to see
how well he is housed
or to see
the flowers or
the lack of them —
or what?
To keep the rain
and snow from him?
he will have a
heavier rain soon —
pebbles and dirt
and what not —
let there be no glass
and no upholstery
phew!
And no little
brass rollers
and small easy wheels
on the bottom —
my townspeople
what are you thinking of?
A rough
plain hearse then
with gilt wheels

and no top at all.
On this the coffin lies
by its own weight.
No wreaths please —
especially no
hot house flowers.
Some common memento
is better
something he prized
and is known by:
his old clothes —
a few books perhaps
God knows what!
You realize
how we are
about these things
my townspeople —
something will be found —
anything
even flowers
if he had to come to that.
So much
for the hearse —
for heaven's sake tho'
see to the driver!
Take off
the silk hat!
In fact that's no place
at all for him —
up there

unceremoniously
dragging our friend out
to his own dignity.
Bring him down —
bring him down!
Low and inconspicuous!
I'd not have him ride
on the wagon at all —
damn him —
the undertaker's
understrapper!
Let him hold the reins
and walk at the side
and inconspicuously too.
Then briefly
as to yourselves:
walk behind —
as they do in France,
seventh class, or
if you ride
Hell take curtains!
Go with some show
of inconvenience—
sit openly —
to the weather
as to grief.
Or do you think
you can shut grief in —
what — from us?
We who have perhaps

nothing to lose?
Share with us
share with us —
it will be money
in your pocket —
remember that, and
this:
there is one land —
and your two feet
are sucked down
so hard on it that
you cannot raise them —
where men are
truly equal
for they all have
nothing.
Go now, I think
you are ready.

TOUCHÉ

The murderer's little daughter
who is barely ten years old
jerks her shoulders
right and left
so as to catch a glimpse of me
without turning round.
Her skinny little arms
wrap themselves

this way then that
reversely about her body!
Nervously
she crushes her straw hat
about her eyes
and tilts her head
to deepen the shadow —
smiling excitedly!
As best she can
she hides herself
in the full sunlight
her cordy legs writhing
beneath the little flowered dress
that leaves them bare
from mid-thigh to ankle —
Why has she chosen me
for the knife
that darts along her smile?

TO A SOLITARY DISCIPLE

Rather notice, mon cher,
that the moon is
tilted above
the point of the steeple
than that its color
is shell-pink.
Rather observe
that it is early morning

than that the sky
is smooth
as a turquoise.
Rather grasp
how the dark
converging lines
of the steeple
meet at the pinnacle —;
perceive how
its little ornament
tries to stop them!
See how it fails!
See how the converging lines
of the hexagonal spire
escape upward
receding, dividing!
— sepals
that guard and contain
the flower!
Observe
how motionless
the eaten moon
lies in the protecting lines.
It is true:
in the light colors
of the morning
brown-stone and slate
shine orange and dark blue
but observe
the oppressive weight

of the squat edifice!
observe
the jasmine lightness
of the moon!

STILLNESS

Heavy white rooves
of Rutherford
sloping west and east
under the fast darkening sky:

What have I to say to you
that you may whisper it to them
in the night?

Round you
is a great smouldering distance
on all sides
that engulfs you
in utter loneliness.

Lean above their beds tonight
snow covered rooves;
listen;
feel them stirring warmly within
and say — nothing.

PRISON WEEDS

The isles of evil odors
a chain of islands
on the river
like ulcers
on the flesh
the isles of evil odors.

I break stones
in the stone shed
big ones
into little ones
big ones
into little ones
big ones
into little ones
big ones
into little ones
I break stones
in the stone shed.

A row of men
a row of naked men

standing against the wall
waiting,
a desk,
a scribe,
a centurion,
they are recording
marks of identification:
" deep long scar on right side "
" one on palm of right hand "
" one on back of right hand "
" one on palm of left hand "
" one on back of left hand "
" one on instep of right foot "
" one on sole of right foot "
" one on instep of left foot "
" one on sole of left foot "
" next "

Bones
a barrel of bones
the bones of last week's stew
the rotten prison stew
no —
it's not a dog
it's not a cat
it's a man
a man
made in the image of God.

I bought twenty-five onions
from a nigger
twenty-five onions
for ten cents
every night
before the lights go out
we each eat an onion
weeping
we each eat an onion.

Old men
a line of old men
like so many patriarchs
or fathers of the church
they are the bucket gang
they carry the buckets to the river
in solemn procession
like so many patriarchs
or fathers of the church
they carry the buckets to the river
with heads bowed
with trembling hands
they carry the buckets to the river.

He never speaks
he never reads
he never laughs
always silent
always brooding

always sad
deep sunken eyes
black beard
noble brow
he resembles a German Christ
no one knows why " he's up "
no one knows when he came
no one knows when he'll go
they say
" nobody home."

" The Priest "
" Who wants the priest? "
the keeper calls
" I want the priest "
" Well my son? "
" Father! "
" What my son? "
" Father! "
" the Christ is in the cooler "
The priest passed on
he did not understand.

Early
in the morning
I look out on the river
the little barred window
faces the river
I like to watch

the life on the river
tugs
scows
sail boats
and steamships
I watch them gliding
along on the river
some up
some down
some fast
some slow
some noisy
some silent
I watch them gliding
along the river
I like to look
at the life on the river
Late at night
I look out on the river
the little barred window
faces the river.

The warden
he's a nice old man
in uniform
so spic and span
his face is red
his hair is white

his eyes are blue
his smile is bright
his home is swell
his table fine
and I'm quite sure
so is his wine
investigators
go away
with nothing
but the best
to say
they're satisfied
beyond expression
the warden
made such good impression.

The sabbath
damn the sabbath
day of ennui
day without work
day without diversion
day without forgetfulness
day without end
damn the sabbath.

Now
that I'm soon to be free
another day
another night

now
that I'm soon to be free
I feel
a strange unease
Maybe the
soul
just before
the expiration of its sentence
on the verge of regaining
the freedom of eternal life
feels
at the thought of separation
from the body
as I feel
at the thought of separation
from my cell.

LALLA RAM

The garden was warm, languid,
The tiny shadows of nime trees softly fingered white balconies,
The palms fell limply back from the heavy sun,
Everything was old, beautifully old,
Everything was old, with the energy of life forgotten

Lalla Ram passed through the garden,
The nime trees gathered in their tiny wavering shadows and grouped themselves in bold patterns on the walls,
The marigolds burst into generous peals of orange laughter,
The small yellow flowers rippled in mellow chuckles that shook their fat green bushes,
The smooth trunks of the palms straightened with easy royalty and strode about the garden.
The sun shadows were suddenly black and bold in the white light,
Everything was life and the joy of life,
When Lalla Ram passed through the garden.

THE DEAD

The dead are walking;
I hear the scraping of their shoes upon the floor,
The great rooms echo with their hollow voices;
I hear the creaking of their shoes upon the stairs,
I see them slanting toward their graves.

The dead are always cold,
I feel the windows rattle as they pass,
The dead are walking in the road
I hear the wailing of children as they pass
Of little children dragged along by the dead.

The hills are black,
The moon is a cold white,
It is like a great mouth opening to swallow the dead.